Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (original) A method of processing a food product, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a source of pulsed ultraviolet (UV) radiation; and

directing the UV radiation at the food product so as to photo-ablate the food product.

2. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 1, further comprising selecting a combination of parameters associated with the radiation.

3. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 2, wherein the parameters include at least one of a group including radiation focus spot size, radiation pulse repetition rate and source power.

4. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 3, wherein said selecting step includes increasing the pulse rate so as to increase processing efficiency.

5. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 2, further comprising adjusting the parameters to alter a performance characteristic of the method.

6. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 5, wherein the performance characteristic is processing speed.

7. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 1, wherein the UV radiation has a wavelength in a range equal to about 150 nm to 280 nm.

8. (currently amended) The method of **[[statement]]** **claim** 6, wherein the UV radiation has a wavelength equal to about 266 nm.

9. (original) An apparatus for processing a food product, the apparatus comprising:

a laser emitting radiation having a wavelength in the ultraviolet range; and

wherein a combination of parameters associated with the radiation is selected so that said laser photo-ablates the food product.

10. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 9, wherein the parameters include at least one of a group including radiation focus spot size, radiation pulse repetition rate and source power.

11. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 10, wherein the

combination is based on a characteristic of the food product.

12. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 10, wherein the combination is based on a profile defined by ablation depth versus laser intensity.

13. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 10, wherein the combination is adjusted according to a performance characteristic.

14. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 13, wherein the performance characteristic is cutting depth.

15. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 9, wherein the UV radiation has a wavelength in a range of about 150 nm to 280 nm.

16. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 15, wherein the UV radiation has a wavelength equal to about 266 nm.

17. (original) An apparatus for processing a food product, the apparatus comprising:

a laser emitting radiation having a wavelength in the ultraviolet range, wherein the radiation is directed towards the food product so as to photo-ablate the food product.

18. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 17, wherein the radiation is defined by a combination of parameters.

19. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 18, wherein the combination includes focus spot size, radiation pulse repetition rate, and laser power.

20. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 17, wherein the combination corresponds to at least one of a group including a processing performance characteristic and a characteristic of the food product.

21. (currently amended) The apparatus of **[[statement]]** **claim** 17, wherein the wavelength is about 200 nm.

22. (original) A method of processing a food product, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a laser that generates ultraviolet (UV) radiation;

selecting operation parameters associated with the laser, wherein the parameters include radiation focus spot size, radiation pulse repetition rate and source power; and

directing the UV radiation towards the food product so as to photo-ablate the food

product.